IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

In re application of:	DeGiulio, Vincent E. et al.	Examiner:	Burgess, Barbara N.
Serial No.:	10/056,887	Group Art Unit:	2157
Filed:	January 25, 2002	Docket No.:	33836.00.0002
For:	**TRACKING SYSTEM INCORPORATING BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE**		

APPEAL BRIEF PURSUANT TO 37 C.F.R. § 41.37

Dear Sir:

Appellants submit this brief further to the Notice of Appeal filed December 30, 2008 in the above-identified application ("the Application").

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I. Real Party in Interest

Accenture Global Services GmbH is the real party in interest in this appeal by virtue of an executed Assignment from the named Inventors of their entire interest to Accenture Global Services GmbH. The Assignment evincing such ownership interest was recorded on January 25, 2002, in the United States Patent and Trademark Office at Reel 012540, Frame 0621

II. Related Appeals and Interferences

To Appellants' knowledge, there are no related Appeals or Interferences filed, pending, or decided.

III. Status of Claims

The originally filed Application contained claims 1-61, and claims 62-77 were added during prosecution of the Application. Claims 5, 7, 8, 11, 14-16, 35-41 and 66-69 were subsequently canceled and claims 17-29 and 42-61 were withdrawn. Claims 1-4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 30-33, 62-65 and 70-77 were amended during prosecution of the Application. Claims 1-4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 30-34, 62-65 and 70-77 are rejected. No claims have been allowed or held allowable, and there are no objections to the claims. A copy of appealed claims 1-4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 30-34, 62-65 and 70-77 are attached at Appendix A. Of the pending, appealed claims, claims 1, 9 and 30 are independent.

IV. Status of Amendments

A final Office Action was mailed October 31, 2008 (the "Appealed Office Action"). No amendments to the claims have been made subsequent to the Appealed Office Action, and the claims listed in Appendix A reflect the claims as they stood at the time the Appealed Office Action was mailed.

V. Summary of Claimed Subject Matter

Claim 1 recites an apparatus (FIG. 1, element 100; ¶ 0013) for tracking a plurality of containers (¶¶ 0016, 0036), wherein the apparatus is coupled to a status tracking structure (FIG. 1, element 104; ¶ 0013; FIG. 2, elements 270-272; ¶¶ 0029, 0030) that provides event information (¶¶ 0006, 0013) regarding at least a portion of the plurality of containers. In particular, the apparatus comprises an event table (FIG. 3, element 306; ¶ 0035) for storing the event information; a rule execution component (FIG. 2, element 219; ¶ 0019; FIG. 3, element 310; ¶ 0036), constituting at least a portion of a centralized tracking manager (FIG. 1, element 104; FIG. 2, element 210) and coupled to the event table, that processes the event information in accordance with at least one rule (FIG. 3, element 312; ¶ 0036), wherein the at least one rule tests for non-optimal use (¶¶ 0006, 0013) of at least one container of the plurality of containers based on the event information; and a configuration engine component (FIG. 2, element 223; ¶ 0019; FIG. 3, element 316; ¶ 0037), also constituting at least a portion of the centralized tracking manager and coupled to the rule execution component, that causes the rule execution component, without regard to occurrence of the event information and according to at least one user-specified execution frequency (¶¶ 0037-0040; FIG. 4), to process the event information in accordance with at least a portion of the at least one rule.

Claim 2 depends from claim 1 and recites an event engine component, coupled to the status tracking structure and the event table, that receives the event information, stores the event information in the event table and, in response to the receipt of the event information, causes the rule execution component to process the event information in accordance with at least a portion of the at least one rule (FIG. 2, element 229; ¶ 0023; FIG. 3, element 304; ¶¶ 0035, 0036).

Claim 6 depends from claim 1 and recites at least two rules wherein the configuration engine component associates at least two execution frequencies with the at least two rules such

that a portion of the at least two rules is executed with a frequency different from other rules of the at least two rules (FIG. 4, element 402; ¶ 0038).

Claim 62 depends from claim 1 and further recites wherein the at least one rule determines whether at least one empty container of the plurality of containers has been allowed to sit for greater than a period of time (¶ 0016).

Claim 63 depends from claim 1 and further recites wherein the at least one rule determines whether at least two partially-full containers of the plurality of containers have been dispatched to a destination within a period of time (¶ 0016).

Claim 64 depends from claim 1 and further recites wherein the at least one rule determines whether a given container of the plurality of containers is less than half full prior to loading of the container on a vehicle (¶ 0036).

Claim 65 depends from claim 1 and further recites wherein the at least one rule determines whether two containers of the plurality of containers are less than ninety percent full when combined (¶ 0036).

VI. Grounds of Rejection to be Reviewed on Appeal

Claims 1-4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 30-34, 62-65 and 70-77 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable given U.S. Patent No. 6,509,830 to Elliott in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0091501 to Durbin et al. (hereinafter "Durbin").

VII. Argument

A. The Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) Based On Elliott In View Of Durbin Must Be Reversed Because The Cited References Do Not Teach The Claimed Subject Matter As Alleged

To establish prima facie obviousness of a claimed invention, all the claim limitations must be taught or suggested by the prior art. M.P.E.P. § 2143.03 *citing In re Royka*, 490 F.2d 981, 180 USPQ 580 (CCPA 1974). Thus, when determining whether a claim is obvious, an examiner must make "a searching comparison of the claimed invention – including all its limitations – with the teaching of the prior art." *In re Ochiai*, 71 F.3d 1565, 1572, 37 USPQ.2d 1127, 1133 (Fed. Cir. 1995).

1. Brief Summary Of The Elliott Reference

Elliott is directed to a system (FIG. 1, element 100) in which a tracking server (FIG. 1, element 110) tracks a device (FIG. 1, element 105) and monitors alarm occurrences (FIG. 15, blocks 1510, 1515) for the tracked device based on location and sensor information associated with the device (FIG. 14, blocks 1435, 1440). In one embodiment, the tracked device reports the location/sensor data to the tracking server on a continuous or periodic basis (col. 9, lines 35-39) thereby causing the tracking server to process the data for alarm events. (col. 10, lines 5-9) In another embodiment, the tracked device processes the location/sensor data and only reports to the tracking server when an alarm event is detected. (col. 10, lines 50-55) Alarm events may be subsequently communicated to subscriber devices (FIG. 1, element 115) in accordance with stored information concerning preferred communication methods (col. 6, line 50 – col. 7, line 6).

2. Brief Summary Of The Durbin Reference

Durbin recites a system for remotely managing a network of waste containers (FIG. 2, element 12; ¶ 0004). Each waste container is equipped with a monitoring unit (FIG. 2, element 38), and a central computer (FIG. 2, element 50) periodically polls the containers to check their status (¶ 0016), including whether each container is full or experiencing an alarm condition (abstract). The central computer then processes the containers' status into a form which is compatible with remote monitors (FIG. 13, element 404; ¶ 0089). Processing of the status data is tied to those instances in which the status data is obtained, i.e., when a container either reports in or is polled, either automatically according to a user-defined polling frequency or upon user demand. (¶ 0063)

4. Claims 1, 3, 4, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 30-34

With regard to, for example, claim 1, Appellants respectfully submit that the combination of Elliott in view of Durbin does not teach a configuration engine component that causes a rule execution component to process event information (i.e., location and/or sensor information) in accordance with at least one rule and at least one user-specified execution frequency, but without regard to occurrence of the event information. As a result, Appellants submit that a prima facie case of obviousness has not been established.

In the Appealed Office Action, it is asserted that Elliott teaches a configuration engine component causing a rule execution component to process the event information in accordance with at least one rule, at least one user-specified execution frequency and without regard to occurrence of the event information, citing col. 5, lines 15-25, 40-61; col. 6, lines 50-67; col. 9, lines 50-67; col. 10, lines 5-47, 50-55; and col. 11, lines 1-14, 20-35 of Elliott. However, Appellants respectfully submit that none of the cited portions of Elliott recites processing event

information without regard to occurrence of the event information. Col. 5, lines 15-25 of Elliott describes how geographic and temporal limits for a tracked device may be established in order to define alarm conditions, whereas col. 5, lines 40-61 establish that records for tracked devices comprising time, location and/or sensor "parameters" may be established. Col. 6, lines 50-67 of Elliott teach records that may be used to define alarm events or contact methods for subscriber devices permitted to receive information regarding tracked devices. Col. 9, lines 50-67 of Elliott describes how, in one embodiment, the tracked device reports location and/or sensor data to the tracking server on a continuous or periodic basis. Col. 10, lines 5-47 of Elliott describes how the tracking server, upon receiving the location/sensor data, can test for alarm events, whereas col. 10, lines 50-55 refers to another embodiment in which the tracked device, rather than the tracking server, test the location/sensor data for the occurrence of alarm events. Finally, col. 11, lines 1-14 of Elliott further elaborates on this additional embodiment concerning how, upon detecting an alarm event, the tracked device accordingly notifies the tracking server, whereas col. 11, lines 20-35 provides a specific example of this additional embodiment. It is to be noted that nowhere in this long citation to Elliott's disclosure is it either taught or suggested that Elliott's location and/or sensor data may be processed for alarms (i.e., according to at least one rule, as presently claimed) *without regard to the occurrence of the event information.*

Indeed, blocks 1435, 1440 and 1510 of FIGs. 14 and 15 and the corresponding description at col. 9, line 62 – col. 10, line 9 make clear that Elliott's tracking server (in the embodiment in which it processes the location/sensor data) receives the location/sensor data and then proceeds directly to processing the location/sensor data to determine if any alarm events have occurred. In this embodiment, Elliott's tracked device does indeed report its location/sensor data on a "continuous or periodic basis." As a result, Elliott's tracking server is

processing the data according to a specific frequency, i.e., the frequency at which the tracked device reports its data. However, this *clearly ties* the processing of the location/sensor data by the tracking server *into the occurrence of the event data*. As a result, Elliott is thus seen to fall short of teaching this claimed limitation.

Furthermore, this shortcoming of Elliott is not remedied by the application of Durbin. As noted above, Durbin teaches a user-defined frequency for polling waste containers, but does not teach processing of the received data without regard to the occurrence of event information. Quite the opposite, the processing of Durbin's database (comprising the received event information) is directly tied to the polling frequency. As noted in ¶ 0063 of Durbin, processing of the database is tied to those instances in which the status data is obtained, i.e., when a container either reports in or is polled. As such, Appellants respectfully submit that the combination of Elliott in view of Durbin fails to teach all of the claimed limitations and therefore fails to establish prima facie obviousness of claim 1.

Appellants further note that the other independent claims 9 and 30 include similar, if not identical, limitations to those described above relative to claim 1. Further still, claims 3, 4, 10, 12, 13 and 31-34 each depend from respective ones of independent claims 1, 9 and 30 and are allowable for at least the same reasons. As a result, and given the arguments presented above regarding claim 1, Appellants respectfully submit that the combination of Elliott in view of Durbin fails to establish prima facie obviousness of claims 1, 3, 4, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 30-34.

5. Claim 2

With regard to claim 2, Appellants additionally note that claim 2 is a dependent claim. Thus, the arguments separately presented herein with respect to that claim from which claim 2 depends apply equally hereto and are incorporated by this reference.

With regard to claim 2, the Appealed Office Action states, in total, that: "Elliott discloses the apparatus of claim 1, further comprising: a configuration engine component, coupled to the rule execution component, that periodically causes the rule execution component to process the event information in accordance with some of the at least one rule (column 10, lines 5-1 5)." Without reaching the merits of this assertion, Appellants note that claim 2 recites an event engine component that stores the event information and, in response to the receipt of the event information, causes the rule execution component (recited in claim 1) to process the event information in accordance with at least a portion of the at least one rule. Thus, the rejection of claim 2 fails to address the limitations of claim 2 (claim 2 does not recite a configuration engine component), much less prevent any evidence that either Elliott or Durbin teaches the claimed limitations.

In the "Response to Arguments" section of the Appealed Office Action (p. 16), it is stated that "[c]laim 2 claims 'an event engine component' that performs similar functions to that of a configuration engine component in claim 1. Therefore, the cited portions of Elliott include the cited portions of claim 1." To the extent understood by Appellants, it appears that the basis used in rejecting claim 2 is that it recites limitations "similar" to those recited in claim 1. Appellants note that both claims 1 and 2 recites limitations concerning how event information is processed. However, even casual inspection of the language of claims 1 and 2 reveals that, whereas claim 1 recites "a configuration engine component . . . coupled to the rule execution component, that causes the rule execution component, *without regard to occurrence of the event information* and according to at least one user-specified execution frequency, to process the event information in accordance with at least a portion of the at least one rule", claim 2 recites "an event engine component . . . that receives the event information, stores the event information . . . and, *in*

response to the receipt of the event information, causes the rule execution component to process the event information in accordance with at least a portion of the at least one rule". (emphasis added) As the highlighted language demonstrates, contrary to reciting "similar" limitations, claims 1 and 2 in fact two completely opposite modes for processing event information; in the former, event information is processed without regard to the occurrence of event information, in the latter, it is processed specifically in response to receipt of the event information (i.e., upon its occurrence from the perspective of the event engine).

To the extent that claim 2 is thus seen to recite limitations not taught in claim 1, Appellants respectfully submit that it is improper to rely on the same basis of rejection of claim 1 when rejecting claim 2. In short, no prima facie basis for rejecting claim 2 has been established and claim 2 is therefore in suitable condition for allowance.

6. Claim 6

With regard to claim 6, Appellants additionally note that claim 6 is a dependent claim. Thus, the arguments separately presented herein with respect to that claim from which claim 6 depends apply equally hereto and are incorporated by this reference.

With regard to claim 6, Appellants respectfully submit that the combination of Elliott in view of Durbin does not teach at least two execution frequencies with at least two rules, such that a portion of the at least two rules is executed with a frequency different from other rules of the at least two rules. The Appealed Office Action cites col. 10, lines 30-49 of Elliott as teaching these limitations. The cited portion of Elliott teaches the comparison between two parameters to determine whether an alarm event should occur. For example, the tracking server may compare the speed of a vehicle to a permissible speed in order to determine whether an alarm event should be indicated. Appellants recognize that Elliott teaches the possibility of two separate rules, for

example one alarm event when a vehicle reaches 50 MPH, and a second alarm event when the vehicle reaches 75MPH.

However, this teaching in Elliott of separate alarm conditions (i.e., two different rules, in the parlance of the instant claims) is not the equivalent of processing of two separate rules *at differing frequencies*, as presently claimed. Simply stated, even though Elliott teaches two rules based on a vehicle's speed, Elliott does not teach processing these two rules (i.e., assessing whether or not their triggering conditions have been satisfied) at separate frequencies. For example, Elliott does not teach that the 50 MPH alarm event is processed more or less frequently than the 75 MPH alarm event.

Appellants have noted the arguments presented in the "Response to Arguments" section of the Appealed Office Action (p. 16) that:

> [C]ontacting a person (rule) is only executed when certain parameters (frequencies) are met. These parameters are specified by the user. For example, if the speed data indicates 75 mph, then notify subscriber of excessive acceleration of the vehicle. Although several speeds (event information) have been reported and stored at the server, only the speeds meeting a specified parameter (frequency) trigger notification (rule) to be executed.

and further that:

> Elliott teaches several execution frequencies such as acceleration and speed. Rules for these frequencies include contacting subscriber by paging, contacting by email, etc.

From this, it appears that the Appealed Office Action is equating the notification methods taught by Elliott (i.e., the various modes available for contacting Elliott's subscriber devices 115 concerning alarms detected for the tracked devices 105) with the claimed at least one rule for processing the event (location and/or sensor) data. Appellants respectfully submit that this is a wholly unreasonable reading of the claimed "at least one rule" for processing event information. Indeed, as the cited portions of Elliott establish, the notification methods are unrelated to

processing of the event information (i.e., the location and sensor data), but are instead concerned with the best ways for notifying subscribers of the occurrence of alarms. Stated another way, it is unreasonable to read both Elliott's alarm conditions based on location/sensor information *and* his notification methods on the claimed "at least one rule."

Furthermore, the assertion that Elliot's "certain parameters" defining an alarm condition somehow reads on the claimed different "frequencies" for executing different rules is untenable. The assertions that "[a]lthough several speeds (event information) have been reported and stored at the server, only the speeds meeting a specified parameter (frequency) trigger notification (rule) to be executed" and "Elliott teaches several execution frequencies such as acceleration and speed" seem to defy the common understanding of the word "frequency" as used in the instant application, i.e., the number of times a specified periodic phenomenon occurs within a specified interval (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 4th Ed., 2006). That is, speed or location data "meeting a specified parameter" sufficient to trigger an alarm notification has no bearing on how often (i.e., the frequency) such speed or location data is processed to determine whether such triggering parameters are met.

For these reasons, Appellants respectfully submit that the limitations of claim 6 are not taught by the cited reference, which claim is therefore suitable for allowance.

7. Claims 62, 70 & 74

With regard to, for example, claim 62, Appellants additionally note that claim 62 is a dependent claim. Thus, the arguments separately presented herein with respect to that claim from which claim 62 depends apply equally hereto and are incorporated by this reference.

With further regard to, for example, claim 62, Appellants respectfully submit that the cited reference does not teach at least one rule to determine whether at least one empty container

has been allowed to sit for greater than a period of time. Appellants agree with the general assertion stated in the Appealed Office Action that "Durbin teaches polling [containers at use-defined frequencies] for conditions in which alarms are to be triggered." However, claim 62 recites additional limitations not taught by Durbin, i.e., whether at least one empty container has been allowed to sit for greater than a period of time. Stated another way, the general observation that Durbin teaches monitoring for alarm conditions does not, by itself, read on the specific limitations recited in claim 62. None of the six paragraphs cited in the Appealed Office Action teach a rule that determines whether a container has been allowed to sit for greater than a period of time.

For these reasons, the combination of Elliott in view of Durbin fails to establish prima facie obviousness of claim 62, which claim is therefore in suitable condition for allowance. Appellants further note that the other independent claims 70 and 74 include similar, if not identical, limitations to those described above relative to claim 62. As a result, and given the arguments presented above regarding claim 62, Appellants respectfully submit that the combination of Elliott in view of Durbin fails to establish prima facie obviousness of claims 70 and 74.

8. Claims 63, 71 & 75

With regard to, for example, claim 63, Appellants additionally note that claim 63 is a dependent claim. Thus, the arguments separately presented herein with respect to that claim from which claim 63 depends apply equally hereto and are incorporated by this reference.

With further regard to, for example, claim 63, Appellants respectfully submit that the cited reference does not teach at least one rule to determine whether at least two partially-full containers of the plurality of containers have been dispatched to a destination within a period of

time. Appellants agree with the general assertion stated in the Appealed Office Action that "Durbin teaches polling [containers at use-defined frequencies] for conditions in which alarms are to be triggered." However, claim 63 recites additional limitations not taught by Durbin, i.e., whether at least two partially-full containers of the plurality of containers have been dispatched to a destination within a period of time. Stated another way, the general observation that Durbin teaches monitoring for alarm conditions does not, by itself, read on the specific limitations recited in claim 63. None of the six paragraphs cited in the Appealed Office Action teach a rule that determines whether at least two partially-full containers of the plurality of containers have been dispatched to a destination within a period of time. This is not surprising given that, as a person having ordinary skill in the art will appreciate given the context of waste containers in Durbin, it is unlikely that Durbin would be concerned with two or more partially-full containers being dispatched to a destination within a period of time and it is therefore unnecessary for Durbin contemplate such rules. Further, with regard to the "Response to Arguments" on p. 17 of the Appealed Office Action, the observation that Durbin teaches a container that communicates the ¾, ½, or ¼ pressure conditions is inapposite to the specific limitations recited in claim 63.

For these reasons, the combination of Elliott in view of Durbin fails to establish prima facie obviousness of claim 63, which claim is therefore in suitable condition for allowance. Appellants further note that the other independent claims 71 and 75 include similar, if not identical, limitations to those described above relative to claim 63. As a result, and given the arguments presented above regarding claim 63, Appellants respectfully submit that the combination of Elliott in view of Durbin fails to establish prima facie obviousness of claims 71 and 75.

9. Claims 64, 72 & 76

With regard to, for example, claim 64, Appellants additionally note that claim 64 is a dependent claim. Thus, the arguments separately presented herein with respect to that claim from which claim 64 depends apply equally hereto and are incorporated by this reference.

With further regard to, for example, claim 64, Appellants respectfully submit that the cited reference does not teach at least one rule to determine whether a given container of the plurality of containers is less than half full prior to loading of the container on a vehicle. Appellants agree with the general assertion stated in the Appealed Office Action that "Durbin teaches polling [containers at use-defined frequencies] for conditions in which alarms are to be triggered." However, claim 64 recites additional limitations not taught by Durbin, i.e., whether a given container of the plurality of containers is less than half full prior to loading of the container on a vehicle. Stated another way, the general observation that Durbin teaches monitoring for alarm conditions does not, by itself, read on the specific limitations recited in claim 64. None of the six paragraphs cited in the Appealed Office Action teach a rule that determines whether a given container of the plurality of containers is less than half full prior to loading of the container on a vehicle. Further, with regard to the "Response to Arguments" on p. 17 of the Appealed Office Action, the observation that Durbin teaches a container that communicates the ¾, ½, or ¼ pressure conditions fails to recite the further limitation of claim 64 that a rule is used to determine whether a given container of the plurality of containers is less than half full prior to loading of the container on a vehicle..

For these reasons, the combination of Elliott in view of Durbin fails to establish prima facie obviousness of claim 64, which claim is therefore in suitable condition for allowance. Appellants further note that the other independent claims 72 and 76 include similar, if not identical, limitations to those described above relative to claim 64. As a result, and given the

arguments presented above regarding claim 64, Appellants respectfully submit that the combination of Elliott in view of Durbin fails to establish prima facie obviousness of claims 72 and 76.

10. Claims 65, 73 & 77

With regard to, for example, claim 65, Appellants additionally note that claim 65 is a dependent claim. Thus, the arguments separately presented herein with respect to that claim from which claim 65 depends apply equally hereto and are incorporated by this reference.

With further regard to, for example, claim 65, Appellants respectfully submit that the cited reference does not teach at least one rule to determine whether two containers of the plurality of containers are less than ninety percent full when combined. Appellants agree with the general assertion stated in the Appealed Office Action that "Durbin teaches polling [containers at use-defined frequencies] for conditions in which alarms are to be triggered." However, claim 65 recites additional limitations not taught by Durbin, i.e., whether two containers of the plurality of containers are less than ninety percent full when combined. Stated another way, the general observation that Durbin teaches monitoring for alarm conditions does not, by itself, read on the specific limitations recited in claim 65. None of the six paragraphs cited in the Appealed Office Action teach a rule that determines whether two containers of the plurality of containers are less than ninety percent full when combined. Further, with regard to the "Response to Arguments" on p. 17 of the Appealed Office Action, the observation that Durbin teaches a container that communicates the ¾, ½, or ¼ pressure conditions fails to recite the further limitation of claim 64 that a rule is used to determine whether two containers of the plurality of containers are less than ninety percent full when combined. Indeed, Elliott appears to be completely silent concerning any rule concerning more than one container.

For these reasons, the combination of Elliott in view of Durbin fails to establish prima facie obviousness of claim 65, which claim is therefore in suitable condition for allowance. Appellants further note that the other independent claims 73 and 77 include similar, if not identical, limitations to those described above relative to claim 65. As a result, and given the arguments presented above regarding claim 65, Appellants respectfully submit that the combination of Elliott in view of Durbin fails to establish prima facie obviousness of claims 73 and 77.

VIII. Conclusion

For the reasons advanced above, Appellants submit that the Examiner erred in rejecting pending claims 1-4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 30-34, 62-65 and 70-77 and respectfully request reversal of the decision of the Examiner.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: February 24, 2009

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APPENDIX A

CLAIMS ON APPEAL

1. An apparatus for tracking a plurality of containers, wherein the apparatus is coupled to a status tracking structure that provides event information regarding at least a portion of the plurality of containers, the apparatus comprising:

an event table for storing the event information;

a rule execution component, constituting at least a portion of a centralized tracking manager and coupled to the event table, that processes the event information in accordance with at least one rule, wherein the at least one rule tests for non-optimal use of at least one container of the plurality of containers based on the event information; and

a configuration engine component, also constituting at least a portion of the centralized tracking manager and coupled to the rule execution component, that causes the rule execution component, without regard to occurrence of the event information and according to at least one user-specified execution frequency, to process the event information in accordance with at least a portion of the at least one rule.

2. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising:

an event engine component, coupled to the status tracking structure and the event table, that receives the event information, stores the event information in the event table and, in response to the receipt of the event information, causes the rule execution component to process the event information in accordance with at least a portion of the at least one rule.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the event information comprises location information corresponding to the plurality of containers.

4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the event information comprises environmental information corresponding to the plurality of containers.

6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the at least one rule comprises at least two rules, and wherein the configuration engine component associates at least two execution frequencies with the at least two rules such that a portion of the at least two rules is executed with a frequency different from other rules of the at least two rules.

9. An apparatus for tracking a plurality of containers, wherein the computer architecture is coupled to a status tracking structure that provides event information regarding at least a portion of the plurality of containers, the apparatus comprising:

an event table for storing the event information;

a rule storage component;

a rule execution component, constituting at least a portion of a centralized tracking manager and coupled to the event table and the rule storage component, that processes the event information in accordance with at least one rule stored in the rule storage component, wherein the at least one rule tests for non-optimal use of at least one container of the plurality of containers based on the event information and wherein the rule storage component permits modification of any of the at least one rule independent of the rule execution component; and

a configuration engine component, also constituting at least a portion of the centralized tracking manager and coupled to the rule execution component, that causes the rule execution component to process the event information in accordance with at least one periodic rule of the at

least one rule without regard to occurrence of the event information and according to at least one user-specified execution frequency.

10. The apparatus of claim 9, further comprising:

an event engine component, coupled to the status tracking structure and the event table, that receives the event information, stores the event information in the event table and, in response, causes the rule execution component to process the event information in accordance with at least one-of the at least one rule.

12. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the event information comprises location information corresponding to the plurality of containers.

13. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the event information comprises environmental information corresponding to the plurality of containers.

30. In a system for tracking a plurality of containers comprising a tracking manager coupled to a status tracking structure that provides event information, regarding at least a portion of the plurality of containers, a method in the tracking manager comprising:

receiving the event information; and

processing the event information in accordance with rules of at least one rule that are evaluated regardless of occurrence of the event information and according to at least one user-specified execution frequency, wherein the at least one rule tests for non-optimal use of at least one container of the plurality of containers based on the event information.

31. The method of claim 30, wherein processing of the event information further comprises processing the event information in accordance with at least a portion of the at least one rule in response to receipt of the event information.

32. The method of claim 30, wherein the event information comprises location information corresponding to the plurality of containers.

33. The method of claim 30, wherein the event information comprises environmental information corresponding to the plurality of containers.

34. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon for performing the method of claim 30.

62. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the at least one rule determines whether at least one empty container of the plurality of containers has been allowed to sit for greater than a period of time.

63. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the at least one rule determines whether at least two partially-full containers of the plurality of containers have been dispatched to a destination within a period of time.

APPENDIX A

64. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the at least one rule determines whether a given container of the plurality of containers is less than half full prior to loading of the container on a vehicle.

65. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the at least one rule determines whether two containers of the plurality of containers are less than ninety percent full when combined.

70. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the at least one rule determines whether at least one empty container of the plurality of containers has been allowed to sit for greater than a period of time.

71. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the at least one rule determines whether at least two partially-full containers of the plurality of containers have been dispatched to a destination within a period of time.

72. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the at least one rule determines whether a given container of the plurality of containers is less than half full prior to loading of the given container on a vehicle.

73. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the at least one rule determines whether two containers of the plurality of containers are less than ninety percent full when combined.

74. The method of claim 30, wherein the at least one rule determines whether at least one empty container of the plurality of containers has been allowed to sit for greater than a period of time.

75. The method of claim 30, wherein the at least one rule determines whether at least two partially-full containers of the plurality of containers have been dispatched to a destination within a period of time.

76. The method of claim 30, wherein the at least one rule determines whether a given container of the plurality of containers is less than half full prior to loading of the given container on a vehicle.

77. The method of claim 30, wherein the at least one rule determines whether two containers of the plurality of containers are less than ninety percent full when combined.

EVIDENCE APPENDIX

[NONE]

RELATED PROCEEDINGS

[NONE]